(c) the steps being taken by Government to bring these soldiers back to the country?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): a) There are 62 Indian soldiers believed to be in Pakistani jails.

(b) These soldiers are believed to be mainly of two categories; prisoners of war (54) and those (8) who had inadvertently crossed the International Border/Line of Control.

(c) The Government, through diplomatic channels, has been consistently taking up the issue of early release and repatriation of the Indian Prisoners of War. The matter was also raised during the visit of the Prime Minister of Pakistan to New Delhi on November 24, 2004. It was also discussed during the Foreign Secretaries level discussions on December 27, 2004. Pakistan has not acknowledged the presence of these Prisoners of War in its custody.

Relaxation in physical standards for recruitments

†807. SHRI HARISH RAWAT: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether some relaxations in the physical standards prescribed for recruitment in the defence services of India were available to the Garhwali, the Kumaoni and the Gorkha youths;

(b) whether some of these relaxations have been withdrawn;

(c) if so, since when;

(d) whether Government is aware of the fact that this step of the Defence Ministry has led to grave discontentment in these regions which have a martial traditions; and

(e) if so, whether Government is willing to restore the above relaxations as before?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) No, Sir. However, in the Army, keeping in view the overall economic development, betterment in physical standards in the country, the existing relaxations have been revised with effect from 1st August, 2004.

(d) Adequate representation is being received from these areas for recruitment in the Army even after the said revision.

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(e) No, Sir. Adequate candidates with revised and higher physical standards are available from all these regions.

Throwing out of passengers from the Farakka Express by armymen

808. DR. M.A.M. RAMASWAMY:
SHRI DATTA MEGHE:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether some armymen had thrown five passengers out of the Farakka Express at Sikohabad in Firozabad district in Uttar Pradesh on 23rd January, 2005;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Army has ordered a court of inquiry into the incident;

(d) if so, the details thereof;

(e) whether the inquiry report has since been received; and

(f) if so, the details thereof and the action taken against the accused armymen and the compensation paid to the next of kin of the victims?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (f) On 23.1.2005, some persons were allegedly pushed out from Train No. 3483 Farakka Express at Shikohabad Railway Station. At that moment Train No. 2393 Up Sampurna Kranti Express passed through and 5 of these passengers were run over by that train. The Army has ordered a Court of Inquiry to investigate involvement, if any, of any Army personnel. The report has not yet been received.

As regards compensation to the next of kin of the victims, the same is paid after a claim is filed in the Railway Claims Tribunal and a decree is awarded. Since no compensation claim has yet been filed by the victims'-families, no compensation has been paid.

Expansion plans of coast guard

809. SHRI S.M. LALJAN BASHA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Coast Guard has ambitious expansion plans for 2005-2006 and 2006-2007;